

LECTURES ON EPHESIANS

by

Louis T. Talbot, D.D., LL.D.

Copyright @ 1937

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE BODY—ITS WORTHY WALK (4:1-16) PART I

WE NOW come to the fifth and sixth divisions of the book of Ephesians: The Believer's Walk and Warfare, chapters 4, 5, and 6. In chapters 4 and 5 we are given the believer's walk; in chapter 6, the believer's warfare. Let us read Ephesians 4:1-3:

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Note the opening words, "**I therefore.**" The word, "**therefore,**" connects what Paul is about to say, concerning the believer's conduct, with what he has already said in chapters 1-3. In the light of this great revelation concerning the mystery, the Apostle Paul says, "**I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.**"

What a high calling this is! That "calling" has been set before us in the first three chapters of the Epistle. As individuals we are "**quickened.**" "**raised,**" and "**seated**" in Christ, made members of the household of God. We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. We are possessors of His life; we are indwelt by His Spirit, and one day we shall share His glory. This is our individual calling. Our calling collectively is to form the mystical Body of Christ, the living Temple, the present habitation of God through the Spirit. This calling carries with it a tremendous responsibility.

The word "**therefore**" in Paul's writings is worthy of notice for so often it is the link which joins great doctrines of the Bible with practical, daily living. Many of God's people have the doctrinal portions of the inspired Word in their minds, but fail to see the practical conclusions to which such doctrines lead. Knowledge of God's truth always carries a great responsibility. Paul in his writing habitually presents the responsibilities concerning conduct in daily living after he has propounded great doctrines.

For instance, turn to Romans, chapters 1 to 11. He there sets before his readers the great doctrine of justification by faith. Immediately following we read the exhortation in 12:1:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

The same is true in the Letter to the Galatians.

In chapters 1 to 4 he places before the Galatians the great truths concerning the believer's relation to the law of Moses. In order that Judaizing teachers should not succeed in attempting to bring believers again into bondage, the apostle in chapter 5 exhorts:

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

“**The yoke of bondage**” means the Mosaic Law.

And so in Ephesians 4 Paul sets before the Ephesian Christians their high calling in Christ, exhorting them to live holily. He tells them that they are members of the household of God, and encourages them to walk worthy of such a calling.

The best means to use in assisting Christians to walk in the pathway of obedience is to set before them their position in Christ. By such an effective way Paul corrected the walk of the Christians in his day.

I was asked by a pastor if I preached against card playing, dancing, and such worldliness, to which I answered, “I endeavor to correct looseness of walk in God’s way. Ephesians 4:1 is that way, **‘I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.’”**

Look at the word, “**beseech**.”

That word belongs to grace. In effect, Paul is saying, “*I beg you to walk worthily.*” I wonder why the good, old aristocratic English word, becoming, is so seldom used. When I was doing something which I shouldn’t be doing as a lad, my mother used to say. “Do not do that, my son. It is not becoming.”

The words in John 1:36 are very significant: “**And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God!**” Following this verse we read: “**And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus**” (v. 37).

There was something about the walk of the Lord Jesus Christ that attracted John the Baptist and constrained two disciples to follow Him. He walked worthy. There was nothing “little” about Him. There was something about His manner of living that attracted men’s attention.

My brother Christian, this should be true of you and me. In view of the fact that we are “**quickened**,” “**raised**,” and “**seated**”; in view of the fact that we are members of the household of God and heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, we should walk worthy of our great and high calling.

Why? In order that the world may be able to see the Body of Christ and so come to know Christ the Head, now in glory.

I. Graces.

In Ephesians 4:2, 3, Paul specifies two characteristics which should mark our walk.

(1) "*Lowliness.*"

This is a grace which we acquire, not one with which we are born. The very opposite characteristic is evidenced in every human being from infancy to old age. Christ indwelling, controlling, and molding a life produces such a walk. The more we become like Him, who "**took upon him the form of a servant,**" and emptied Himself, the more we shall walk like Him in all "**lowliness.**"

When William Carey, the father of modern missions, was dying on the deck of a ship in Singapore, his friends stood praising him. Mr. Carey, regaining consciousness, heard what they were saying and gathered strength sufficient to say, "I do not want you to talk about William Carey. I want you to talk about Carey's Saviour. When I am dead, please put on my tombstone:

‘A poor, weak, and helpless one,
On Thy kind arm I fall.’”

Were you to go to Singapore today, on Carey's grave you would read those carved words. That grace should characterize every Christian.

(2) "*Meekness.*"

Meekness is the grace exhibited when one is slow to take offense.

It enables one to be long suffering and kind. The Lord was a meek Man. He was charged with being in league with Beelzebub and of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub. How deeply such an accusation must have stung the Son of God! He suffered in mind and soul more than we can know because of such thrusts, but He did not revile the people who accused Him. He became our great Example in showing us what our attitude should be toward those who are our enemies.

My friends, as with lowliness, so with meekness, we are not born possessing that fruit. Meekness is a grace which can only be acquired through fellowship with the Son of God. And thus His Word says:

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matthew 11:29).

(3) "*Long-suffering.*"

How much of this grace do we possess? What is your attitude toward those who misrepresent you? Do you pay them back in their own coin? Do you fight fire with fire? If so, you are not long-suffering.

(4) "*Forbearance.*"

Forbearance means to put up with. It is a grace which Christians should possess who live with unconverted loved ones. If you ever hope to exercise influence over an unconverted husband, or relative, you must know something about the possessing of the graces, meekness, lowliness, long-suffering and forbearance. You and I are not walking worthy of our calling if these graces do not characterize our lives, and it is not likely that we can influence people to follow Christ.

My brother, now in the glory, was a pastor of a church in the city of St. Louis twenty-five years ago. I spent a week with him on one occasion, and on the Lord's Day attended his church where I had the privilege of hearing him expound the Word of God. At the close of the service, he introduced me to a faithful Christian woman whose face was deeply furrowed.

Later my brother told the story of her life to me.

For eighteen years she had put up with the demands of her husband, a drunkard, without retaliation. One evening he came home in a fit of temper because he had fallen in the mud while under the influence of liquor. When he entered the house, he removed his shoes and in an ugly manner threw them before his wife, commanding her to polish and clean them. Down to the basement she went and polished the shoes "**as unto the Lord.**" She returned them to him so well shined that he could almost see his face in them. His heart was broken. He saw in those shining shoes the face of the Lord. For years his wife had been living an example; she had walked worthy of her high calling.

This last act of hers evidencing forbearance and meekness was used by God not only to show his sinfulness to him, but also to manifest the glory of Christ in the life of his wife. Immediately he was led to accept her Christ, and he became a holy, happy saint, transformed by the Christ he had seen living in the life of his life companion.

My friends, regardless of how aggravating circumstances may be, the indwelling Christ can, and will strengthen us and enable us to walk in a lowly manner, with meekness, forbearance and long-suffering.

II. Unity

"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Note the exact wording of this statement. It is not the unity of the Body which we are to keep. The Holy Spirit keeps that, for we have nothing to do with the keeping o the unity of the Body. Christ in you and Christ in me, in all regenerated people, is the secret of the unity of the Body.

This is beautifully set forth in the Old Testament tabernacle, a symbol of the church on earth. The tabernacle consisted of forty eight boards built on ninety-six sockets of silver which were made of redemption money (cf. Exodus 30 and 38). Every man was redeemed with half a shekel of silver, and if 685,000 people gave one half shekel of silver, the amount of silver must have weighed about one half ton. This mass of silver was cast into sockets and formed the foundation of the tabernacle, upon which the boards of the tabernacle were erected.

The board represents believers being formed into one Body, and the silver foundation is typical of redemption, the foundation of the church. The boards were held together, unified, by an invisible rod which passed through the heart of each board. The invisible rod represents the invisible Christ dwelling within every believer, “**Christ in you, the hope of glory**” (Col. 1:27).

The unity of believers began on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came to indwell and empower. From that day to the present one, every believer has been united in the Body of Christ, the unity being preserved by the indwelling Holy Spirit in every redeemed heart.

And so Paul exhorts us to endeavor “**To keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**”

How do we keep the “**Unity of the Spirit**”? We do so when we meet a believer in the Lord and recognize him as our brother regardless of race nationality, or social position. If he trusts Christ as his Saviour he is our brother. We must recognize Him as joined to, united to us.

While I was conducting a campaign in Chicago near the close of the World War I, I attended a dinner at which representatives from every nation were gathered. Presiding over the meeting was a Christian Hebrew. Next to him sat a German, and then I, an Englishman, sat next, with an Irishman to my right. Think of that, an Englishman seated between an Irishman and a German at a time like that! There followed an Italian, an Austrian, a Russian, a Japanese, a Chinese and so on around the table. People from every country were there—Canada, Spain, the United States, and Mexico. Were they scrapping? Not at all. They were having the most blessed fellowship that believers can have on this earth. They were united by one Spirit in Christ.

The German said to me, “Think of it, brother!” I turned to the Irishman and said, “Mike, we are having a grand time, aren’t we?” And to think that a Christian Hebrew presided at that dinner! At the close of dinner we stood with linked hands—our hearts already linked—and sang: “Blest be the tie that binds, our hearts in Christian love.”

That was a manifestation of “**Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**”

I did not know to what denomination any of them belonged, nor was I sufficiently concerned to find out. We were members of the Body of Christ by the baptism of the Spirit. You will never “**Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,**” unless you recognize the unity of the Spirit and endeavor to keep that unity.

Verse 4 reads, “**There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling . . .**”

The ground for this unity about which we have been thinking is set forth in this verse. Verses 5 and 6 present our individual responsibility in relation to the unity mentioned in verse 4:

One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Let us observe the three things mentioned in verse 4.

(1) "***There is one body.***"

We are not told to make one Body. The Spirit of God has done that. "**There is one body.**" That Body is the theme of this Epistle, "**The church of Jesus Christ.**" The Body is composed of individuals who have been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Every believer in Christ, regardless of nationality, is a member of the "**Church, which is his body.**" "**There is one body.**"

(2) "***One Spirit.***"

This refers to the Holy Spirit by whose operation we are baptized into the "**one body.**" That is why He is mentioned here in connection with the "**one body.**" He came on the day of Pentecost to call out this Body, and through His baptism the Body is being formed.

We read in I Corinthians 12:13, "**For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.**"

If the unity of the Body is a truth which we are to recognize as already existing, so is also the baptism of the Holy Spirit, by which this unity is brought about. Every believer has been baptized by the Holy Ghost. There is no person who is a believer in the Lord Jesus who has not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit is the operation of the third Person of the Trinity, making one a member of the mystical Body. That operation takes place at the time of conversion.

The filling of the Holy Spirit is an altogether different subject with which we shall deal later. What we are to understand now is that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not an experience, or something to seek. It is the dispensational act of the Holy Ghost, uniting you and me to the one Body. Unless this great truth is recognized, you will never understand the great revelation which the Apostle Paul endeavors to unfold to us in this Epistle, nor will you know anything about "**Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**"

(3) "***One hope.***"

The third great truth which forms the ground of the unity is "**The one hope of your calling.**" A Christian does not have a thousand hopes; he has only one. An unconverted person has multiplied hopes which are never realized. A believer has the "**one hope**" which he will realize in the coming of the Lord. This "**hope**" is called the "**hope of your calling.**"

What is that "**hope**"? It is that some day we shall behold the face of the Lord Jesus Christ and shall be transformed into His image. All true believers are included.

"As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (I Corinthians 15:49).

We have seen this truth foreshadowed in Solomon's temple in the stones covered with the cedar wood, but carved in conformity to the door. The “**door**” represents Him who said “**I am the way,**” “**I am the door.**” The image of the door was placed upon the stones. This is the ground of our unity: “**One body, one Spirit, and one hope of your calling.**”

Our individual responsibility growing out of this revelation is set forth in verses 5 and 6: “**One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.**”

Let us take these points one by one:

(4) “**One Lord.**”

The second Person of the Trinity is introduced to us together with our relation to Him. In the preceding verses we have seen the Holy Spirit mentioned in His relation to the Body baptizing believers into the mystical Body, thus uniting them to the Head. What is our responsibility growing out of this unity through the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

Here it is: “**One Lord.**” The Ephesians already knew Christ as their Saviour; He is here introduced as Lord. He is not only the One who gives life to the believer, but He governs the believer's walk as well, just as the members of our physical bodies are governed by our heads. Many Christians do not know Christ as the Lord of their life.

A student in the Bible Institute of Los Angeles said some time ago, “I have been fighting with the Lord about a call to the mission field.”

I asked, “You have been fighting with whom?”

He answered, “I have been fighting with the Lord.”

Then I said, “You do not know Jesus Christ as Lord or you would not fight His will. ‘**Lord**’ refers to Christ as the One who governs, controls, and guides a life. You do not know Him thus. You are governing your own life; therefore you do not want to go where He desires.”

Reader, do you know Christ as Lord? You have taken life from Him. Do you take law from Him? Suppose that He should desire to send you to India, would you recognize His Lordship?

Have you noticed how many times the expression, “**Yea, Lord,**” occurs in the Bible? The two words are very significant. One should never say, “No, Lord,” for in saying “No,” you must rule out the word, “Lord.” And if you say, “Lord,” you must always say, “Yea,” to be in conformity to His will.

One Scripture passage contains the expression, “No, Lord.” It is found in Acts 10:14. Peter had been in a trance and saw a sheet filled with clean and unclean animals let down from heaven. God said, “**Rise, Peter; kill, and eat**” (Acts 10:13).

Peter said, “**Not so, Lord.**”

Notice the incongruity. Either the ‘**Not so**’ must go, or the “**Lord**” must go. Peter struck out the “**Not so.**” Our responsibility as members of the Body of Christ is to recognize Christ as Lord.

(5) “*One faith.*”

This refers to the body of truth which the Spirit has given to us in the canon of Scriptures, the written truth for which we are to contend earnestly. It is not saving faith about which Paul is writing, but the great doctrines which are propounded in the Word of God. Paul’s church epistles are largely given to the pronouncement of great church doctrines so sadly attacked today.

Our responsibility, therefore, is to contend earnestly for the faith, that is, to contend for the great body of truth earnestly, lovingly recognizing the Lordship of Christ.

(6) “*One baptism.*”

To what baptism does Paul refer?

Some teachers would have us believe that he refers to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If the “**one baptism**” refers to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, then we have a repetition of what is given in verse 4, concerning the Body and the Spirit. The “**one body**” included the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

In I Corinthians 12:13 we read, “**For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.**”

The “**one baptism**” to which the Apostle Paul refers is “*water baptism*,” which is the outward expression of our allegiance to Christ and of our recognition of Him as Saviour and Lord.

In other words, if you know Christ as Lord, you will do what He commands.

In Luke 6:46 Jesus says, “**And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”**

Water baptism might stand for the practical walk of the believer in those things which the Lord has commanded us to do. Read your New Testament, not for the purpose of criticizing; too many do that, but for the purpose of noting the definite commands of the Lord Jesus Christ, asking the question, “Am I obeying these commands?”

If you will do this, you will find that the Word of God is a very searching book. There never was a time when Christians played with the commands of the Lord Jesus as they do today. And still they would call Him Lord.

(7) “***One God.***”

“**One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all**” (v. 6).

We have seen that the Holy Spirit forms the “**one body**” through His baptism. The second Person of the Trinity is the Lord of that Body. God, the Father, is God of all. Note carefully what Paul says concerning God, the Father: “**He is the Father of all,**” not in the sense that modernistic preachers would have us believe as set forth in their Universal Fatherhood of God, and their universal brotherhood of man, but in the sense that the apostle mentions in Acts 17:26: “**And hath made of one blood all nations . . .**” In other words, He is the Creator of all men. In this sense He is the Father of all, and has a relationship, not only to believers in His Son, but to every individual who has lived, even to those who have died Christless.

The fact that Christless men repudiate God and refuse to recognize Him as Saviour does not make them independent of Him. They are still responsible to Him and shall give account of every thought, every word, every deed, at the Great White Throne Judgment.

Paul says this “**God is above all . . . and in you all.**”

Notice the distinction he makes. God is “**above**” all men, but He is only “**in you**”—Ephesian believers. In other words, God only indwells those who, like the Ephesians, have been regenerated by the Spirit of God. Thus we have set before us the distinction between God’s attitude toward the world as a whole and those who have been born again by the Spirit of God.

What an exalted position ours is! As we walk the streets of our cities, God wants us to be conscious that He indwells us. Consequently, we have the exhortation given in the beginning of this chapter, “**Walk worthy.**” This we will do if we recognize our various relationships to the triune God.

III. Gifts.

We shall consider the gifts which the risen Christ has given to the members of His Body, verses 7-11:

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.

The Spirit of God with regard to the unity of the Body of Christ expresses the diversity of the gifts to the saints, and their ministry of them. The opening words, “**But unto every one of us**” make plain that not one member of the Body has been overlooked. “**Every one of us**” has received some gift for the edifying of the Body of Christ, and for the unity of the faith.

Some gifts are more outstanding because of their public character, but you and I cannot get along without the ministry of the most insignificant of God’s people.

Every believer has some contribution to make toward the Body as a whole.

I so frequently urge Christian people to unite with the testimony of believers in a church, urging them to use their gifts and talents for the promoting of the gospel.

At the close of a meeting where this had been stressed, a man and his wife said, "We are glad to unite with the believers here in this church, but we do not have any talents or gifts to use. God has overlooked us entirely when distributing gifts." How mistaken they were, for we all have gifts, "**But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.**"

Some of the greatest blessings which I have received have come as a result of the ministry among the black brethren when I was a pastor in Texas. Never shall I forget one black preacher. While visiting in his home, I asked him to expound the Word of God, for we needed a conference concerning the work which God had given him to do. His exhortation of the Word has remained with me more than twenty-five years.

You have a contribution to make toward the Body of Christ, reader. You may feel like a little finger of the physical body, but the little finger is of great service to the body as a whole. It can do what the legs and arms cannot do. When there is a little particle of dust in my eye, my leg is of little value, but the little finger is important. Do not, therefore, despise any gift God has given.

Remember also that He not only gives a gift, but He also imparts "**grace**" to enable you to exercise it. No matter what it is God has called you to do, by His grace you can do it. Verse 7 gives that assurance: "**But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.**" If your gift requires great grace, great grace will be given you.

When Martin Luther stood before the Diet of Worms, he needed much grace. That was the most august ecclesiastical assembly the world has ever known. Over it presided the Emperor, Charles V, whose dominion embraced two worlds. It included 6 electors of the Empire, 80 dukes, 30 prelates of various ranks, 7 ambassadors, the deputies of 5 cities, a number of princes and sovereigns, counts and barons with the Pope Nuncios, and others. Imagine Luther standing before such an assembly!

As he advanced toward the throne on which the Emperor was seated, every eye was fixed upon him, and the rustle and the hum of the previous moments died away into solemn stillness. Then two questions were asked Luther by the Archbishop's Chancellor:

1. "Dost thou admit that these books were written by thee?"
2. "Wilt thou retract these books and their contents, or dost thou persist in the things thou hast advanced?"

Luther made this splendid answer: "Unless I be convicted of error by the Holy Scriptures, I neither can nor dare retract anything, for my conscience is held captive by God's Word. Here I stand, I can do not otherwise; God help me. Amen."

To that magnificent speech we owe the Protestant Reformation. But you say, “I could not do that.” Yes, you could if God had called you to do it. You could not do what you are now doing were it not for the grace of God. Luther was “**given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.**”

Let us remember that our supply of grace is according to the gift of Christ to us.

Verses 8-10 present the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head, as the One who bestows these gifts upon the members of His Body. This significant description of the work of the Lord is given just before the gifts are enumerated.

The opening words, “**Wherfore he saith,**” carry us to Psalm 68:18 where we read:

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also that the Lord God might dwell among them.

We obtain a thought from the Psalm which we do not immediately find when reading Ephesians 4:8, for in Ephesians we read: “**And gave gifts unto men.**” In Psalm 68 we have, “**Thou hast received gifts for men.**”

In other words, Christ is seen as the glorified Man receiving from the hands of the Father gifts which in turn He bestows upon the church. We see the Trinity working together in calling out the Body of Christ and preparing each member of the Body for ministry. The Father, Son, and Spirit are intensely interested in the creation of the Body of Christ, all Three having a part in its calling and ministry.

What do the words “**led captivity captive,**” mean? This expression refers to the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, victor over sin, death, and Hades. In the margin “**captivity captive**” means, “*a multitude of captives captive.*”

These captives were evidently Old Testament saints who were in Paradise or “**Abraham’s bosom,**” waiting for the Son of God to make possible the entrance for them into God’s presence. Until the cross, the Old Testament saints went to Paradise which was called by the Jews “**Abraham’s bosom,**” which was a part of Sheol, the place of the departed spirits, where they waited for the accomplishment of redemption.

When Christ died, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, signifying that access into the presence of God was possible. The veil, as you know, divided the Holy of Holies, God’s dwelling place, from the Holy Place. The rending of the veil in the midst from the top to the bottom signified that a way into God’s presence had been made.

From the cross the Lord Jesus went into Paradise. When He ascended into the presence of God, a multitude of captives accompanied Him, Old Testament believers in the coming Messiah numbering from Abel, who brought the Lamb offering, to the last of the Old Testament saints. All of the faithful ones who brought the offerings of lambs and bulls “**saw Christ’s day**” and were “**glad.**”

They died in hope and went to Sheol to await the accomplishment of Christ's atoning work.

David evidently referred to this event in Psalm 16:10: "**For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [Sheol]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.**"

We are told that when Christ ascended, He did so to take a place "**Far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.**" He went deeper down than anyone could ever have gone, and now He has ascended above all "**principalities and powers**" seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The gifts which He bestowed and bestows are named in verse 11:

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.

The purpose of these gifts is given in verses 12-16:

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. We shall be concerned with the gifts themselves.

(1) "*Apostles and prophets.*"

We still have apostles and prophets in their writings. We have seen from former studies that they laid the great doctrinal foundation, propounding in their writings Christ, and the doctrines concerning Christ. In the inspired writings, therefore, the apostles and prophets still live and speak with us.

(2) "*Evangelists, pastors, and teachers.*"

These we have today. Evangelists are the bearers of the evangel, or the "**good news,**" concerning salvation through faith in the shed blood of the Son of God. Evangelists are especially prepared by the Spirit of God to reach unconverted men with the message of life. The Spirit of God gives to them a burning passion to see lost souls brought out of darkness. Their message has the note of conviction arousing men to a realization of their sinful condition and lost estate. Their message appeals to such to embrace the provision which Christ has made for them.

The "**pastor**" is a "*shepherd.*" God especially prepares certain members of His Body to shepherd the flock, to minister to them in sickness, sorrow, and bereavement, as well as to feed them on the Bread of Life.

A “**teacher**” is one to whom God has given special insight into great truths of the Word of God, one to whom God has given the gift of imparting the same to the members of the Body of Christ, in order that they might become “**rooted**” and “**grounded**” in the doctrines, thereby shielded from false teachers and false prophets.

The gifts to the church, “**evangelists, pastors, and teachers,**” are beautifully set forth in type in the service and worship of the tabernacle and Solomon’s temple.

The buildings, as we already have seen, were shadows of the church, the present habitation of God through the Spirit. Everything about those two buildings was in keeping with what we have in Ephesians as shadows of the Body of Christ.

There were three divisions of the tribe of Levi. To each a part of the tabernacle was entrusted.

The family of Merari cared for the silver sockets, made of atonement money, the boards, the pillars, and the bars. When the cloudy pillar rested, meaning that the twelve tribes were to camp, cease on their journey toward Canaan, the Merarites were called upon first to erect the tabernacle. They laid the silver sockets in an oblong on the sand and erected the boards of acacia [shittim] wood overlaid with gold upon this foundation. The bars were then put upon the boards thus holding the tabernacle together.

When the work of the Merarites was finished, the Gershonites began to minister. Carrying the beautiful curtains, the coverings, the hangings, and the cords to strengthen, the Gershonites beautified the work of the Merarites and strengthened the work with the cords which they applied.

The Kohathites followed carrying the holy vessels, the ark for the Holy of Holies, the table of shewbread, the candlestick, the golden altar of incense for the Holy Place, and the brazen altar and laver for the courtyard. Their ministry was the furnishing of the tabernacle and court for worship and sacrifice.

In these three families of Levites we have foreshadowed the “**evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher.**” The evangelist carries the silver sockets and by the Spirit of God, causes men to be built upon that redemptive foundation. The pastor strengthens and beautifies the work thus accomplished.

The Kohathites bearing the vessels of the sanctuary, foreshadowing the great doctrines of Scripture, represent the teacher.

Just as the Merarites, the Gershonites, and the Kohathites worked together for the erection of the tabernacle in the wilderness until it was completed, so the gifts to the church, “**Evangelists, pastors, and teachers,**” are “**For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ**” (vv. 12,13).

It is worthy of notice that these three families of Levi, the Merarites, the Gershonites, and the Kohathites, did their work under the supervision of God's high priest, Aaron. (See Num. 4:27-33.) So the "**evangelists, the pastors, and the teachers,**" are to work under the supervision of our great High Priest.

The purpose of these gifts is set forth, before stated in verses 12-16: "**For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry . . .**"

Many punctuation marks found in our Bible have been supplied by translators and do not appear in the texts. The comma inserted after "**saints**" obscures the meaning of this passage, because the first two clauses of verse 12 embody the first purpose of the gifts. It should read: "**For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry.**" Gifts have been bestowed upon the church in order that every believer may have a part in the accomplishment of God's purpose for this age.

It is a great mistake to single out a body of men who have received so-called ordination at the hands of men and call them the "**ministry.**" All believers are in the ministry and must function in that place in the Body which God has appointed to them. If you say that you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and evidence that you are a religious "do-nothing," you are certainly a puzzle to the angels of God and a delight to the demons of darkness.

The ministry bestowed upon you by the evangelists, pastors, and teachers is in order that you may serve other members of the Body of Christ more effectively and function for Him. The tragedy is that so many of God's people constantly stand in need of being ministered unto and never come to the place where they minister unto others.

And how long is this ministry to continue? Verse 13 answers this question: "**Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.**"

When will this goal be reached?

It will not be reached until the last member has been added to the Body of Christ. It will not be reached until we come to the glory at the translation of the church, the Body of believers. This ministry will continue until the end of this age. "**The fulness of Christ**" in verse 13 refers to the completion of the Body.

One of these days the last member will be added to the Body of Christ, making it complete. What a precious thought it is to realize that every time you teach a Sunday school class, give out a tract, or speak to a neighbor concerning Christ, you may be doing something which will add the last member to the Body of Christ.

There will then be no need for pastors, evangelists, and teachers. The pilgrim journey will be over and we shall have come "**Unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.**"

Verses 14-16 continue the purpose of the gifts:

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

It is very important that we consider verse 14:

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

How applicable these words are to Christians in Southern California!

This state is noted for its breeds and creeds, most of them coming in the name of Christ, but teaching deadly errors concerning the Person of Christ and His purposes. If one is not grounded in the great truths of the Word of God, he is in danger of falling a victim to their vagaries. How many people there are in this and other states who are affected by "**every wind of doctrine**." They seem to be like balloons thrust into the atmosphere, subject to every current and cross current and carried hither and thither accordingly.

God does not desire us to be so. He does not wish that we remain in a state of protracted babyhood, or as His Word states here: "**No more children.**" He desires that we should be rooted and grounded in the faith and in order that we might be so, He has given gifts to the church. It grieves Him when His redeemed ones remain in the baby state. He longs that we should become full-grown men and women in the faith, knowing His mind and purposes. God is a Father with a father's heart. He delights to see His children grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Son of God just as you, father and mother; rejoice when you see your children developing mentally and physically.

When I was a pastor in Texas, a lady who gave evidence of having a great grief lived in a house near mine. Every time I saw her she seemed to be weeping. Knowing that her husband was a drunkard, I thought that was the cause of her sorrow. When I met her, however, she opened her heart. She had a great sorrow, greater than that of a drunken husband. Her child, twenty-seven years old, had the mind of a two-year-old child. In talking to me about her child, she was unable to control her grief, so great was it over the undeveloped state of her daughter.

I wonder how God feels as He looks down from heaven upon those who have been members of His family for twenty, thirty, or forty years, yet in spiritual growth are like little children, affected by every religious movement that comes across their pathway. I know a number of people within my own acquaintance like that. First they were in the Oxford movement; now they are busy with the Anglo-Israel theory; tomorrow they will be delving into something else. And how offended these little babies become when one endeavors to turn them from the crooked pathway into which they have wandered to the straight, true way.

Never was there a day in the history of the church when Christians needed more to be “**rooted and grounded**” in the faith as in the present day, for false teachers are increasing and their doctrines are becoming more plausible.

False systems and their propagators are described in verse 14 as “**Sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.**”

In other words, such men have selfish purposes and deceive in order to profit from their lies. Paul is not describing in these words people who sell insecure oil stock or land; he is describing religious leaders who come to us these days in the name of Christ.

These words are in keeping with Matthew 24:24 where the end of the age is described by the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, “**For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.**”

We are told in I John 4:1 to “**try the spirits.**” This may be done in several ways.

First, find out what the attitude of the system of teaching is toward the Bible, whether the Bible is held to be the complete revelation of God, or whether it is only a partial revelation with another book needed to complete it. This test shows the true character of Mormonism, Seventh Day Adventism, Russellism, and Eddyism, all of which have books which their adherents teach are as fully inspired as the Bible, thereby placing them side by side with the Holy Scriptures.

Next ask what their belief is concerning the Person of Christ, whether He is the eternal Son of the eternal God, born of a virgin, the perfect Man and the perfect God. Ascertain their attitude toward the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary and find out what they believe concerning the eternal destiny of those who reject Jesus Christ and refuse to believe in Him as Saviour through faith in His blood. Such a test reveals whether they are Universalists or Annihilationists.

Ascertain whether they believe in the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such a test reveals the true character of Russellism, known today as Jehovah’s Witnesses, founded by Judge Rutherford. Determine whether they believe in a literal heaven and a literal hell and whether they believe that Christ who died for our sins and rose again for our justification is He who saves from hell to heaven.

When false teaching is brought under the lens of Holy Writ, its true character is revealed.

But in our proclamation of the great doctrines of the Word, the truth of God, let us remember the exhortation in verse 15 with regard to the spirit in which it should be done: “**But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.**”

What a need there is for the fundamentals of the truth to be emphasized. It is important that we set forth the fundamentals of the faith and contend for them earnestly following Jude’s exhortation.

It is just as important that we should exemplify in our lives the great truths for which we contend, and that we practice at all times and under all circumstances inexhaustible love. Paul says, “**Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love . . . it profiteth me nothing**” (I Corinthians 13:1-3).

How many of us there are who seem to have a profound knowledge of doctrine, but are destitute of love and kindness.

Speak the truth, by all means, but let us speak it in love. And let us live out in our lives the things we proclaim by lip.

There is a beautiful story in the biography of Dr. G. Campbell Morgan. He had four sons, all of whom were preachers. The youngest son, Howard, considered a great preacher, once took his father’s place on this side of the Atlantic while Dr. Morgan ministered in London. Someone came into the drawing-room when the family was there, and, thinking to find out what Howard was “made of,” asked this question, “Howard, who is the greatest preacher in your family?”

Howard had a great admiration for his father and looked across at him; then without a moment’s hesitation he answered, “My mother.”

Howard was right. Sometimes men and women never standing on a platform or a pulpit, preach the greatest sermons, through living out in their daily lives the Word and practicing the great truths of Holy Writ.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said, “The greatest evidence of the truth of the Word of God is a transformed life.”

Atheists and agnostics cannot gainsay a life transformed by the living Christ. Our blessed Head is the One from whom we draw our patience and Christ-likeness. He is the One who supplies the things for our spiritual development. This is the message of verses 15 and 16:

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

The church in its relation to Christ is like the figure of the human body. As every part of the human body, even the smallest gland and sinew, works for the good of the whole and is controlled by the head, so is the mystical Body of Christ.

How few Christians realize this great truth; consequently, in the hour of temptation they battle on in their own strength rather than take strength from the risen Head. And in the hour of sadness, they go many days without grasping the comfort which only the Son of God can give.

The practical realization of this truth will enable us to live a God-glorifying life.

In it is the secret of the life of God's people who live so gloriously triumphant. When we see some of God's people living victoriously above adverse circumstances, we are prone to feel that they do so because they have a greater inherent power than we posses. But this is not so. The secret of such living is that their union as part of the mystical Body of Christ with the risen Head is a truth known and applied in a practical way by them.

Such was the secret in the life of David Livingstone who lived in the tall grass and swamps of Africa, which were infested with disease and poisonous insects, suffering hardships indescribable, yet continuing and pushing forward in the face of tremendous difficulties.

The strength which enabled him to do so came from the risen Head to whom he was united by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The One who said, "**All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth**" was the Lord of his life. The same supply of power is at your disposal and mine, my friends, if we will only appropriate by faith the supply which is there for us.

~ end of chapter 7 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
